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ABSTRACT

This newsletter theme issue focuses on the impact of learning disabilities within families, specifically families with low literacy skills. It explores the effectiveness of family literacy programs, examines the connection between the field of family literacy and learning disabilities (LD), and offers suggestions on how to work with students with LD. It highlights a successful family literacy program and profiles several family experiences. Articles include: (1) "Family Literacy: The Legacy of Learning" (Sharon Darling), which reports on the effectiveness of family literacy programs and the value of inclusive family literacy programs for children with LD; (2) "Family Literacy and Learning Disabilities: Shared Opportunities and Challenges" (Blanche Podhajski), which addresses ways to link the two fields; (3) "Genetic Learning Disability Patterns in Family Literacy" (Dale Jordan), which offers suggestions for working with students and families having faulty visual perception, poor auditory perception, dyslexia, and slow rate of processing; (4) "The Diary of a Family with Dyslexia" (Dorothy Tod), which chronicles the experiences of a mother with LD advocating for a son with LD; (5) "The Five R's of Family Literacy Programs (Virginia Tardeawether)--recruitment, retention, respect, responsibility, and resourcefulness; and (6) "My Life with Dyslexia" (Joni Krantz), which presents one woman's experience in a family literacy program. Brief descriptions of organizations involved in family literacy complete the issue. (DB)

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National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center
A program of the National Institute for Literacy

LINKAGES
Linking Literacy & Learning Disabilities

Spring 1996
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Family Literacy

From the Director . . .

Improving the education of children, especially those "at-risk," and meeting the crucial needs of adults with low literacy skills are imperative. Recently, research has suggested genetic links in the baffling mix of reading disabilities. National Institutes of Health (NIH) data indicate a startling 20% of all Americans have some form of reading disability. NIH researchers state that these reading disabilities make up about two-thirds of all learning disabilities (LD).

Since education begins at home and parents are often a child's first teacher, it is important to recognize the impact of LD within families. If this first teacher has a learning disability, how effective will he or she be? Therefore, family literacy programs - where parents and children have an opportunity to work together - must address the intergenerational problems of learning disabilities, helping create learning environments for all family learners.

This issue of LINKAGES focuses on the impact of LD within families, specifically those with low literacy skills. It explores the effectiveness of family literacy programs, the connection between the family literacy and learning disabilities communities, and offers suggestions on how to work with students with learning disabilities. It highlights a successful family literacy program and profiles several family experiences.

By improving our understanding of learning disabilities and their effects on families, family literacy programs can strengthen their efforts to help meet the needs of students and ultimately reduce the numbers of individuals who suffer the results of school failure.

Neil A. Sturomski
Director

Family Literacy: The Legacy of Learning

By Sharon Darling

If you grew up in a home where cuddles and storybooks were a nightly ritual and silly songs and counting games accompanied each excursion in the car, you lived *family literacy* long before the term was coined. Because of the experiences you had as a child, you have no doubt shared the love of learning with the children in your life. This precious legacy of literacy, the love of learning, is handed down to each generation through examples. By the time a child enters school, a wealth of family experiences have created a solid foundation for new learning.

But literacy development isn't always that easy. There are millions of children entering school this year who have no traditions that connect family and literacy. They have no foundation upon which to build new learning. We call them "at risk," "disadvantaged," and other phrases that speak to missed opportunities that multiply into discouraging predictions. We know that one-fifth of American first graders are from families with low income, and half of these children start school as much as two years, in terms of development, behind their peers. About 20% of our preschool-aged children live in poverty and are likely to live in families where the most educated parent has less than a high school education. Not only do these children lack the advantages of a home with an educated parent, they are also less likely to be exposed to educational

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opportunities outside the home. In addition, the dropout rate of children in low-income families is more than twice the rate of middle-income families and ten times the rate of high-income families.

For many adults and children, living in poverty is a legacy that may be related to the inability to gain the literacy levels needed to succeed. And for the estimated 7 to 10 million children and adults who suffer from learning disabilities, ineffective programs and misdiagnosis have led to deep frustrations that have eroded self-confidence, adding to the challenges faced when families move out of poverty and into self-sufficiency.

The problems our at-risk children face have been tackled with varying degrees of short-term success, at best. The roles of special education classes have swelled by inappropriate placement. We have identified children as learning disabled but have instituted ineffective teaching strategies to help those who have difficulty processing auditory and/or visual stimuli. When children are placed in preschool programs in order to "catch them while they're young," the wrong message may be sent to parents about their ability to assist with their children's learning. The implication that only teachers should teach not only perpetuates the low self-esteem of some parents but sets up an impossible task for our schools.

But in countless communities across the United States, something dramatic is happening. Family literacy programs are making changes in the lives of participating families and in the infrastructure that supports them. What makes family literacy a better solution for some families? Simply stated, family literacy programs work with parents and children simultaneously, honoring the strengths of both. The family as a unit, not the individual adult or child, becomes the main focus.

The National Center for Family Literacy, with the help of the Toyota Motor Corporation, established the Toyota Families for Learning Program. Toyota granted the Center $5.1 million to launch family literacy programs in 15 American cities. The programs help undereducated parents work toward increasing their literacy and life skills while their children attend preschool under the same roof. Does family literacy work? Consider these findings:

Family literacy programs have holding power. The family approach used in the Toyota Families for Learning Program encourages adult learners to commit time to learning, not just for themselves but for their families. Thus far, more than 69% have participated for more than 100 hours, which is the approximate time needed to increase skills one grade level.

Parents in family literacy programs have greatly increased their literacy skills. Most families that enter the program are in a downward spiral of failure fed by lack of education, unemployment, and poverty. The adults' academic skills are inadequate to cope with the problems that at-risk families encounter daily. By the end of the program, these same adults have increased their skills by an average of 1.5 grade levels. The adults in the Toyota Families for Learning Program have positioned themselves to pass the GED, apply for community college or job training, meet the challenges of everyday life, and work toward the goals they once thought unattainable.

Children in family literacy programs are poised for academic success. Children in family literacy programs are usually academically behind their peers who have experienced family literacy. The three- and four-year-olds generally score at the bottom 10% nationally on pretests. Without intervention, these children may remain behind and possibly leave school without a high school diploma. But the upward spiral that lifts their parents toward success also moves these children. By the end of the year most have

improved their academic performance so they rank at the 20th percentile and beyond.

Educationally supportive home environments are created by family literacy programs. By changing the parents' views of attainable goals for themselves, family literacy programs are expanding the range of success for their children. The upward spiral of success embraces the family and impacts all the generations that follow.

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But what about students with a learning disability in family literacy programs? The inclusive family literacy program is one that creates a learning environment that envelopes every learner, those whose skills are acute, and those who have difficulty reading or writing, whose attention spans are short and whose list of failures in school is long.

Students with learning disabilities are not just accommodated in the inclusive family literacy program, they are actively recruited. Many parents with disorders in one or more of the psychological processes involved in using spoken or written language have entered family literacy programs with their children and have established and achieved their goals. They participate in all the components of the program, often embarking for the first time on a path toward strong, consistent, imaginative, interactive parenting. Likewise, they may realize for the first time that a world awaits that includes success in the workplace. Their sense of self-worth and self-esteem is often enhanced because someone has finally recognized that a learning disability is what has prevented them from succeeding in school when they were younger. When the disability is clarified and addressed, accommodations can be made for the parent. The child can also be immediately evaluated to see if he or she has a learning disability as well; having such a diagnosis early and making appropriate accommodations can prevent the damaging scars of early school failure.

While they are studying in the adult education component, parents with learning disabilities are given academic support by a volunteer or paid aide. Their goals may vary; some may be working toward a GED, while others are working toward a reading certificate or acquisition of a driver's license or other credential. They learn to plan, act on their plans, and review their plans in the same fashion that their children are learning a "plan-do-review" process. They may need more time to complete the process. They may need alternative materials and enhanced learning tools, such as computers that enlarge and enhance print. But they do enjoy the thrill of academic success, and they are able to share the joy with their children in the program.

Inclusive family programs provide both mental and physical accessability to academic and family support services for all students, including students with learning disabilities. Functional needs are addressed by caring and considerate staff members who are aware of the rights of students and the responsibilities of the program; these staff have researched materials and resources, and they practice information-processing constructs. Most of all, family literacy educators devote their collective efforts to ensure that students with learning disabilities experience success so that their confidence matches their competence. After all, giving the students accessability is in their best interest, and it is in the nation's best interest as well.❖

Sharon Darling is President and founder of the National Center for Family Literacy in Louisville, Kentucky. She directed the development of the award-winning Parent and Child Education program that launched the family literacy movement in the nation. Ms. Darling is Vice Chair of the Board of Directors for the National Institute for Literacy, and a board member of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy and the National Coalition for Literacy.

Family Literacy and Learning Disabilities: Shared Opportunities and Challenges

By Blanche Podhajski

How wonderful that in this last decade of the 20th century we are recognizing the power of the family as a vehicle for both child and adult literacy. Home is at the heart of family literacy: It is the child's first school, and the parent is the child's first teacher. Because literacy is interactive, parents learn from children as children learn from parents within this most intimate of educational institutions.

Former First Lady Barbara Bush's commitment to family literacy has brought national attention to the importance of adult education. She links parents' literacy levels and practices with their children's success in school. We have long recognized that being read to as a child is one of the best predictors of reading success in the classroom.

There are distinct differences, however, between parents who *can* read to their children but *don't*, and parents who *can't* read to their children. The former group may not have had access to either books or the love of literature. Their literacy may also be compromised by societal stressors, such as poverty and unemployment. The latter group includes adults with learning disabilities. The National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center estimates that 30 to 50% of adults with severe literacy problems have undetected or untreated learning disabilities.

Home is at the heart of family literacy: It is the child's first school, and the parent is the child's first teacher.

The Opportunities

Family literacy and learning disabilities are both complex concepts. Research at the University of Colorado has found strong evidence that learning disabilities in reading have a genetic link that can affect generations of learners, with deficits in phonological awareness showing the greatest possibility of being inherited. Linkages between professionals in these fields can only strengthen literacy for all. Intergenerational literacy initiatives provide unique opportunities not only for adults with learning disabilities but also for their children who may be at risk.

The Challenges

The fields of family literacy and learning disabilities also share challenges. More than 20 years ago, Wiederholt cited three issues affecting the field of learning disabilities: **definition**, **heterogeneity**, and **territorialism**. These concerns are common to the family literacy field as well. Both fields continue to wrestle with precise **definition**. However, each concept can be defined sufficiently to allow for family literacy program development and learning disabilities identification.

Individuals served both by family literacy and learning disabilities programs are **heterogeneous**, each with his or her own unique issues and learning needs. Thus, approaches to family literacy must be tailored by and for communities and respect cultural, ethnic, rural, and urban diversity. Similarly, learning disabilities are manifest in a diverse group of learners. Differences in psychological processes that affect learning must be considered.

Professionals in the fields of learning disabilities and family literacy wrestle with issues of

territorialism. These usually result from differences in philosophical orientation. The field of learning disabilities has been subject to longstanding debates on instructional methods and identification practices. Research findings are helping to clarify some of these concerns. Family literacy program leaders debate approaches to family literacy. Some leaders advocate reinforcing school-like literacy activities within the family setting while others prefer to integrate literacy practices within daily life in some socially significant way. As in many movements, the polarity between views is artificial: Most approaches lie somewhere along a continuum between prescriptive, interventionist models and participatory, empowering ones.

What can be done to promote the link between the family literacy and learning disabilities fields?

- Heighten the awareness of the relationship between adult literacy and learning disabilities.
- Develop effective communication models to share knowledge between the fields of family literacy and learning disabilities.
- Support professional development in learning disabilities for family literacy program leaders and staff.
- Recognize the intergenerational implications of families with learning disabilities.
- Teach parents high risk predictors of learning disabilities.
- Teach adults important language skills which they can impart to their children through listening, speaking, reading and writing.

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Blanche Podhajski is the Founder and Director of the Stern Center for Language and Learning in Williston, Vermont. She is also a Clinical Associate Professor of Neurology at the University of Vermont College of Medicine. ❖

Genetic Learning Disability Patterns in Family Literacy

By Dale Jordan

Numerous studies have shown that learning disability (LD) patterns tend to move down genetic lines from one generation to the next. When we find LD in a child, we may find similar learning struggles in older blood relatives. Yet family literacy efforts have seldom addressed this intergenerational issue. Poor reading, illegible writing, inadequate spelling, inaccurate listening, and poor arithmetic skills might be found across generations. The likelihood of encountering similar LD patterns across generational lines ranges from 30% to 80%, depending upon the population considered. Family literacy providers can expect to find family-linked LD more than half the time.

Generational LD patterns are most often seen when family literacy skills remain low after several years of formal education. In spite of school attendance, blood relatives throughout the family have low scores on achievement tests. Members of these families have been placed in special education programs as far back as such placement was available. Several easily recognized LD patterns are seen in these family generations.

Faulty Visual Perception

I can see OK. I just can't see to read. During the past century several types of faulty visual perception have been described in families who are LD: word blind, irregular saccadic, faulty eye teaming in reading, Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome, off center foveal vision, defective magnocellular pathway structure, and Irlen syndrome. No matter what faulty visual perception is called, a majority of those who cannot raise literacy skills above basic levels have normal eyesight (20/20 acuity), yet they cannot "see" black print on white paper under bright light.

Suggestions for working with students with word blindness

✓Turn off bright overhead light, especially fluorescent lights.
✓Let students read in low light from nearby lamps or windows.
✓Let students wear visors or bill caps under bright light.
✓Place softly colored transparent overlays on book pages.
✓Use large card markers under the lines as students read.
✓Encourage using fingers and thumbs to frame words.
✓Use large print with extra white space between lines.
✓Refer students for developmental vision assessment (DVA).

Poor Auditory Perception

I hear you, but I don't know what you're saying. Poor auditory perception (poor listening ability) may be a pattern in families with LD. A researcher discovered a missing link between the middle ear (where speech sounds are gathered) and the auditory cortex (where speech sounds are interpreted). This difference in neurological structure may be a cause of poor auditory perception. This type of LD makes it difficult for the individual to identify differences between similar sound patterns. For example, "thermos" may sound like "furnace." These persons go through life misunderstanding 30% or more of what they hear. They cannot hear differences in soft vowels or consonants. They cannot remember how to spell. They continually interrupt by saying: "What? Huh? What do you mean?" These LD strugglers misinterpret sermons, phone messages, and oral

instructions. They get their feelings hurt when they misunderstand friendly teasing and group conversations. All oral information must be carefully repeated before family members with poor auditory perception fully understand.

Suggestions for working with students with poor auditory perception

✓Establish eye contact before starting to speak.
✓Touch the listener or call his or her name before speaking.
✓Show important information in writing along with telling it.
✓Leave outlines and notes to remind the listener later on.
✓Show the listener vowels, syllables, and words in print instead of forcing him or her to "hear what the vowel says."
✓Allow the listener to do all required writing on a word processor with a spell checker.

Dyslexia

I know it. I just can't remember how it goes. Dyslexia, an unexplained difficulty in word recognition, may be a pattern in families with LD. Persons who are dyslexic cannot keep details in sequence. They may turn letters and numbers backward or upside down. As they start to do something in sequence, they get lost and begin to scramble the order of details. These struggling learners may reverse left/right and north/south or east/west. They twist syllables on their tongues as they say words and tell stories. They continually "lose their words" and go blank while talking. People with dyslexia may have difficulties writing the alphabet, days of the week, and months of the year from memory.

Suggestions for working with students with dyslexia

✓Encourage keyboard writing instead of handwriting.
✓Encourage multisensory processing: see it/say it/hear it/touch it
✓Allow individual to work with study buddies.
✓Give credit for oral reports instead of writing.
✓Provide tape-recorded material instead of requiring textbook reading.

Slow Rate of Processing

I could do it if I just had enough time. Slow processing is a major problem for those who have LD. The brain pathways where information is processed are very slow receiving, integrating, remembering, and expressing information. Individuals who process information slowly must have plenty of time to move through tasks successfully. It is difficult for these individuals to speed up their rate of thinking.

Working with students' slow processing

✓Avoid timed tasks. Give extended time for tests and assignments.
✓Allow students to work with study partners and take turns, so the slow processor does not experience burnout.
✓Cut work quotas in half, allow plenty of time.
✓Be patient. Never show impatience when a person who processes slowly is trying to respond.
✓Allow persons who process slowly to turn in assignments later.
✓Make tape recordings of instructions to let slow listeners hear again at their own pace.

These are the major cross-generational LD challenges facing family literacy providers. More than half the time, these LD patterns are scattered up and down the genetic line, regardless of the years spent in formal education.

Dale Jordan is in private practice as a consultant in learning disabilities. For 40 years he has worked with LD learners at all levels of education. He is currently LD consultant for family literacy projects in Arkansas, Montana, and North Carolina. He has authored several works, including Overcoming Dyslexia in Children, Adolescents, and Adults; Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities; and Attention Deficit Disorders: ADHD and ADD Syndromes.❖

The Diary of a Family with Dyslexia

By Dorothy Tod

When my son, Ben, entered school I noticed that he was having difficulty learning to read. I tried to get help from the school system, but they just put him in special education classes. I knew that there were other options that might help Ben that the school system wasn't trying. I went to my husband to try to explain. I knew what I wanted to say, but I couldn't relay my feelings in a way that he could understand. I went to the school system to try to explain, but because I couldn't speak education jargon, I couldn't get my point across to them either.

By the time Ben was in the fourth grade, the stigma of being in special education classes, and the lack of progress and success for all of his efforts, left him feeling degraded and hopeless. We tried various methods to help my son – vision training, Irlen lenses, tutors, and art therapy – none of which helped him. My husband, a lawyer and member of the school board, had faith in the school system. He assumed that they knew what was best for Ben. I knew that Ben was not getting the help that he needed. I grew more and more frustrated.

I knew first-hand what my son was going through. At the time, I had undiagnosed learning disabilities that compounded my frustrations. I was an above-average student through high school, earning good grades that helped me get accepted into Vassar College but I ran into serious difficulties in college. My handwriting was terrible. I couldn't write or type well, and I couldn't spell. It was really difficult to decide on a major because of my writing problems. I decided to major in art history, but I couldn't pursue a career in the field because I couldn't master foreign languages. I graduated from college feeling like a total failure. Fortunately, I found a job where I learned film editing. This lead me to a career in film making.

I found my niche in the film industry. As a filmmaker, I could express myself through sight, sound, and motion. I didn't run into the problems that I did in an academic setting where I had to produce written text. Ironically, I made an award winning film about a businessman who learned to read with the help of an adult basic education tutor, but it did not occur to me to relate this information to my own situation.

My learning disabilities really affected my relationship with my family. I could not communicate with my husband, causing my marriage to fall apart. I could not get Ben the help he needed for his dyslexia. I couldn't even help him with his homework. Life was very hectic. I felt helpless and humiliated.

I was at my wits end when my family was referred to Louisa Moats, a learning specialist and dyslexia expert. She tested Ben and recommended the Greenwood School, a residential middle school for boys. Greenwood exemplified everything my own research and intuition told me was necessary for Ben's progress. All aspects of the curriculum use the Orton Gillingham phonetic, multisensory approach to language. The strong arts program integrates language, social studies, and math skills in a meaningful way, and the school fosters a strong sense of self-worth, community, and respect for the environment. After much initial resistance, Ben began to thrive at Greenwood.

When the staff at Greenwood discovered I was a filmmaker, they asked me to produce a film about some of their students. As I was shooting footage of the students, I was amazed at how I

could relate to some of the issues the students had. These students not only reminded me of what I had been through with Ben, they also reminded me of myself! Now that Ben had the help that he needed, I knew I needed to get help for myself.

I had a battery of tests done, including a Weschler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS), that revealed that I had dyslexia, dysgraphia, and an attention deficit disorder. Now I knew why it had taken me so long to finish my assignments in college. I began to see why I had not been able to help Ben with his homework. I understood why it was difficult for me to participate in Ben's Individualized Education Plan meetings. I was a mother with learning disabilities trying to advocate for my son who also had learning disabilities.

I was a mother with learning disabilities trying to advocate for my son who also had learning disabilities.

I learned that learning disabilities often occur from one generation to the next. Now that I knew about my learning disabilities and my son's learning disabilities, I began to think about my father. My father always relied on my mother to take care of family business, like paying bills or writing checks. He always relied on his secretaries to help him with the writing requirements of his job. I remember my father having problems explaining things to me. As a child, I thought my father didn't care about the family, because he was very withdrawn and short with words. Could it be that my father, like me and like Ben was struggling with learning disabilities?

When learning disabilities occur across generations, it puts a unique twist on family literacy. My mother read to me when I was a child and I, in turn, read to Ben when he was a child. Reading to a child exposes the child to information, increases the child's vocabulary, and provides time for family interaction. However, reading to a child does not guarantee that the child will be able to read, especially if the child has learning disabilities. As an adult with learning disabilities, reading to Ben allowed me to work on my own literacy skills.

As a person with learning disabilities, I have learned to advocate for myself. I have grown beyond the frustration and tears. I am taking language classes and working with tutors to develop strategies for my learning disabilities. I am currently working on a documentary that explores the difficulties, as well as the gifts, that come with dyslexia. I will explore how dyslexia plays out in educational, legal, and health systems, work, marriage and daily life, across gender and generations.

Ben graduated from high school as a member of the National Honor Society. After graduating, he got a job to earn money so that he could study and earn college credit in Kenya with the National Outdoor Leadership School. When he returns, he will be attending Evergreen College in Washington state. Our journey has been a long, difficult one, but I wouldn't trade it for anything.❖

Dorothy Tod is a filmmaker and a mother with dyslexia. She has directed and produced several films including: What if You Couldn't Read?; Warriors' Women; *and* Expert Witness. *She is currently working on a documentary about dyslexia.*

The Five "R"s of Family Literacy Programs

By Virginia Tardeawether

Over the years of working in family literacy, I've given much thought to what is important in making family literacy programs successful. Each year the process changes as it is influenced by the ever elusive growth and development in funding sources, partnerships, staffing, local economy, and families. How can one capture the essence of what is important in family literacy? How can one explain to another where the magic lies that can help economically disadvantaged American families break the poverty cycle? I work with the Even Start family literacy program at Chemeketa Community College in Salem, Oregon, and through my professional experiences I continue to learn from our Even Start families what is important for success.

The Even Start program integrates early childhood education, parent and adult education for parents into a project that builds on existing community resources. Our Even Start Program is the result of collaborative efforts that include the Salem Keiser School District, adult and family services, Head Start, and Chemeketa Community College. Our program serves approximately 25 families at a time. Most of the parents in our program dropped out of school in the seventh or eighth grade and have very low literacy levels. Currently, about one third of our parents have learning disabilities, and half are bilingual Hispanic adults.

The less able parents are to apply learning concepts to their lives, the less able they are to help their children.

Chemeketa Community College's Even Start program has been selected as one of five mentor sites in the nation. We are serving the population that we have targeted, more than half of our families return for the second year of the program, and our parents have a high rate of employment or advancement in their current jobs. We owe part of our success to incorporating the 5 "R"s of family literacy education into our program. The 5 "R"s include: recruitment, retention, respect, responsibility, and resourcefulness.

Recruitment

Families enroll in Even Start for a variety of reasons. Because none of our parents were successful in the K-12 environment academically, many of them see Even Start as a new opportunity for success in school. Some parents join the program because they want success for their children. A good recruitment tool for these adults who have had so many bad experiences with school is to explain to them that the program uses a different approach to learning than what they experienced in the past. Explaining that people can learn **how to learn** and suggesting ways to **help their children learn** are major incentives for enrollment in a family literacy program.

Retention

A major problem with family literacy programs is high drop out rates. Some students leave programs because of uncontrollable situations, like financial or family conflicts. Others drop out because they have unrealistic expectations of the program or are discouraged because of past academic failure. At Even Start we make extra efforts to keep families enrolled in our program. We find that designing our curriculum to meet the needs of the students keeps our

retention rate high. We also find that Even Start families encourage each other to stay with the program. Our most useful strategy for retention is to stress and demonstrate to the parents how relevant the program is to their lives.

Respect

Respect for self and others is the foundation from which strong learning relationships spring. Parents who have low self-esteem model low self-esteem to their children. How do you help parents respect themselves and their children? Even Start's staff models continually and naturally the willingness to appreciate each person's unique gifts. The staff spends a few minutes each day noticing each student's strengths. Each staff member will notice a different aspect of the person and have a varied viewpoint of the person's attributes.

Responsibility

At Even Start we stress that students should find some portion of their lives they can be responsible for and be responsible for it. We encourage our students to move beyond blaming someone else for their situations in life and take responsibility for themselves.

Resourcefulness

Most parents join family literacy programs because they were not successful in the K-12 setting. Thus, it is crucial for teachers in family literacy programs to approach learning in a variety of ways. Even Start teachers talk to the students about their learning styles. Then we use creative teaching techniques to meet the needs of the students. At Even Start we encourage our students to advocate for their own personal strengths and to celebrate their unique way of doing things.

Five "R"s of Family Literacy Programs

- Recruitment
- Retention
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Resourcefulness

The less able parents are to apply learning concepts to their lives, the less able they are to help their children. At Even Start we realize that our goal is to get each member of the class to understand and practice the process of applying learning to life. We use the Five "R"s to get our students motivated and excited about learning.❖

Virginia Tardeawether, Lead Instructor and Family Literacy Specialist at Even Start, teaches parenting, basic skills, and conflict resolution. She has a B.S. in science and a master's degree in adult education, with a minor in cross cultural communications.

The National ALLD Center Homepage

The National ALLD Center now has a homepage on the National Institute for Literacy's LINCS WWW site at:

http://novel.nifl.gov

What you'll find:

✓Information on the National ALLD Center
✓National ALLD Center Publications
✓Postings from the NIFL-ALLD Listserv
✓Links to Other LD Resources

My Life With Dyslexia

By Joni Krantz

When I was in the second grade, my parents and I found out that I had dyslexia. I was sent to a special school that did a lot of testing on me, and we found out that my IQ was above average. I was sent back to regular school where I didn't have any accommodations. The school told my parents that I would go through each grade without any problems. What they didn't tell my parents was that the teachers didn't know how to teach children with dyslexia. I had a lot of personal problems at home that, coupled with my problems at school, made me feel worthless.

To get away from my problems and frustrations at school and at home, my mother enrolled me in Job Corps. I wanted to get my GED, but because of my dyslexia, my efforts were not successful. The classes were too large for me, and I felt like the teachers didn't care if I learned or not. I joined the Certified Nurse's Assistant program, and with the help of my nursing teacher, I graduated second in my class. I got jobs at hospitals and nursing homes, but when I left Job Corps, I still had no GED.

When I went back home, my family moved to Oregon, and I went to work at a cannery. I met my husband in Oregon and we had four beautiful children. When my kids started school, I did a lot of volunteer work at their school. I wanted to make sure that my children got the best education that they could. When my oldest son, Mike, started showing signs of dyslexia, I was determined to get him the help that I didn't get when I was in school.

I requested that the school test Mike for dyslexia, but they refused. I was told that it was too early to test him because he was only in kindergarten. I saw my own problems with dyslexia in my son. He wasn't changing a few letters around, he was changing most of them. Mike did not get tested until the second grade. We found out that he had problems with visual perception and attention. By this time, Mike had been acting up in class. He wasn't feeling good about himself.

My feelings are that as soon as a child shows signs of possible learning disabilities, he should be tested so help can be sought. This keeps the child's self-esteem high so he can work with his learning disabilities instead of against them. I got Mike the help he needed. He is now working at the grade level he should be, but his spelling is about a half a grade below his grade level. His self-esteem is high, and he feels really good about himself. Mike got the help he needed, but I was left with my own issues unresolved.

When my daughters started to ask me to help them with their homework, I couldn't help them, which made me feel really bad. I started thinking about going back to school. I wanted to learn the things that my kids learned in school. I wanted to set an example for my kids. How could I expect them to get a diploma when I didn't have one myself? I really wanted to get my GED, but I didn't know where to go or who I could trust.

One day my daughter brought a flyer home from school about a program called Even Start. I learned that I could go to school and take my four-year-old son with me. While I was in class, he would be in class with kids his own age. The program offered free breakfast, lunch, and transportation. I thought it sounded too good to be true, so I threw the flyer away. The next year my daughter came home with another Even Start flyer and asked me to call to get more information. I called the number on the flyer, and they invited me and my son to come down and take a look at Even Start.

An Even Start student met with us and told us all about the program. We met the children's instructor and talked about the children's schedule and what they would learn. I learned about the adult program and how it worked. When I got home, I had made up my mind that I would give Even Start a try.

When I first started at Even Start, I had to work on my self-esteem. The adult instructor, Virginia Tardeawether, helped me realize that I wasn't stupid or retarded because of my learning disabilities. Eventually, I gained confidence in myself and before I knew it, I had passed three GED tests. I was so excited about learning that my family thought I was going nuts.

I knew the writing portion of the GED was going to be difficult for me, because I couldn't spell well. I studied really hard, but I missed passing the test by one point. I studied more, and when I took the test again I passed. I did it! I got my GED!

The two years that I spent at Even Start were very hard on me. I had a lot of personal and health problems. I also had several deaths in my family. If it hadn't been for the Even Start staff, I know I would have given up and not earned my GED. They helped me deal with some personal issues while helping me earn my GED. They even helped me get my driver's license.

It's been a year since Andy and I graduated from Even Start. Now Andy is in the first grade. He's very outgoing and is very eager to learn. He is the top reader in his class and even went to Scott School to show his skills off for Chapter One teachers.

After I graduated from Even Start, I went to Chemeketa Community College to study to be a travel agent. I graduated with a 3.74 GPA. I am now doing outside sales with Travel Network in Salem, Oregon. I also work at Chemeketa Community College Child Care Center as a kitchen assistant.❖

Joni Krantz has been married for 17 years and is the mother of four children. She graduated from Even Start in 1994 and Chemeketa Community College as a travel consultant in 1995.

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LINKAGES is published semiannually. Individual copies are available free of charge from the National ALLD Center by calling (800)953-2553.

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Organizations

American Library Association (ALA)
Office for Literacy and Outreach Services
50 E. Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611

The American Library Association (ALA) has free literacy fact sheets on Family Literacy. Titles are: (1) *Developing a Family Literacy Program*, (2) *How to Write in Plain English*, (3) *How to Recruit Participants Using Nonprint Media*,(4) *How to Start Dial-A-Story*, (5) *Needs Assessment*, (6) *Evaluation of Family Literacy Programs*, and (7) *Libraries and Local Business Partnerships*. Send a self-addressed envelope with $.55 postage to the above address.

Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy
1002 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20007
202/338-2006

The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy supports the development of family literacy programs. The Foundation awards grants to help establish successful family literacy efforts, provides seed money for community planning of interagency family literacy programs, supports training and professional development for teachers, and publishes and distributes materials on effective working programs.

General Educational Development Testing Service (GED)
American Council on Education, Suite 250
One Dupont Circle, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036-1163
202/939-9490; 800-528-9800 (Test Info)

GED provides a chance for adults who dropped out of high school to obtain a high school equivalency diploma. Callers to the GED hotline can receive information about how to prepare for and take the GED tests. Callers who specify that they have a disability can receive a GED information brochure. The GED tests are available in large print, audio cassette, and braille formats. Accommodations are available for adults with specific learning disabilities.

Laubach Literacy Action (LLA)
1320 Jamesville Avenue, Box 131
Syracuse, NY 13210-0131
315/422-9121

LLA specializes in providing services and materials enabling volunteers to work with adults in attaining the level of reading, writing, and mathematical skills needed to solve the problems encountered in daily life. These services are provided by a national network of consultants or by LLA staff.

Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA)
4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234
412/341-1515

LDA is a membership organization for professionals, adults with learning disabilities, and parents of children with learning disabilities. One of LDA's primary functions is the advocacy of educational and rehabilitative legislation effecting persons with LD. Information on publications and membership is available upon request.

Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA)
5795 Widewaters Parkway
Syracuse, NY 13214
315/445-8000

LVA programs provide individualized, student-centered instruction in basic literacy and English as a second language for adults and teens. The national office establishes policies and develops

training programs and materials. The state organizations coordinate and service local affiliates and establish new programs within their geographic areas. The local or affiliate group recruits, trains, and matches volunteer tutors with adults in need of literacy skills.

National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL)
Waterfront Plaza, Suite 200
325 W. Main Street
Louisville, KY 40202-4251
502/584-1133

The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) supports family literacy services across the United States through programming, training, research, and dissemination of information about family literacy. NCFL sells numerous videos and publications on specific family literacy issues, including *Window on the World of Family Literacy,* a quarterly publication. NCFL's bimonthly newsletter, *Update* is available free of charge.

National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD)
381 Park Avenue South
Suite 1420
New York, NY 11565
212/545-7510

NCLD is a national not-for-profit organization committed to improving the lives of those affected by learning disabilities. NCLD's Information and Referral Service links parents, professionals, and others concerned with learning disabilities with the services they need through a computerized database and trained volunteers and staff. NCLD offers membership to the public, which entitles individuals and organizations to receive a special packet of information on learning disabilities, regular updates on learning disabilities, and a copy of their magazine *Their World.*

National Institute for Literacy's FORUM/ LISTSERV
NIFL-FAMILY@literacy.nifl.gov

The National Institute for Literacy's FORUM/LISTSERV provides an exchange network for the sharing of information, research, expertise, and resources regarding family literacy, adult literacy and learning disabilities (ALLD), workplace literacy, and English as a second language (ESL). To join the family literacy listserv, moderated by The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), send a message to:

listproc@literacy.nifl.gov

with a one line message:

subscribe nifl-family firstname lastname

To join NIFL's other listservs replace "family" with "alld," "workplace," or "esl," accordingly.

Orton Dyslexia Society (ODS)
Chester Building, Suite 382
8600 LaSalle Road
Baltimore, MD 21286-2044
410/296-0232; 800/222-3123

The Orton Dyslexia Society is an international membership organization which serves as a clearinghouse of information for professionals, dyslexics, and parents of dyslexics. The Society promotes effective teaching approaches and related clinical educational intervention strategies for dyslexics and disseminates information related to dyslexia.

The Academy for Educational Development

The Academy for Educational Development, founded in 1961, is an independent, nonprofit service organization committed to addressing human development needs in the United States and throughout the world. Under contracts and grants, the Academy operates programs in collaboration with policy leaders; nongovernmental and community-based organizations; governmental agencies; international multilateral and bilateral funders; and schools, colleges, and universities. In partnership with its clients, the Academy seeks to meet today's social, economic, and environmental challenges through education and human resource development; to apply state-of-the art education, training, research, technology, management, behavioral analysis, and social marketing techniques to solve problems; and to improve knowledge and skills throughout the world as the most effective means for stimulating growth, reducing poverty, and promoting democratic and humanitarian ideals.

The National ALLD Center

The National ALLD Center, funded by the National Institute for Literacy, promotes awareness about the relationship between adult literacy and learning disabilities. Through its national information exchange network and technical assistance training, the National ALLD Center helps literacy practitioners, policymakers, and researchers better meet the needs of adults with learning disabilities. We encourage your inquiries and will either directly provide you with information or refer you to an appropriate resource.

The National Institute for Literacy

The National Institute for Literacy is an independent federal agency jointly administered by the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services. The Institute's primary goals are to provide leadership and coordination for literacy activities across federal agencies and among states, the knowledge base for literacy, and create a national communications system that links the literacy field nationwide.

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